

For Immediate Release
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Livestock Assistance Signup Begins in Seven Counties

HELENA, Mont. – Owners of livestock in seven eligible Montana counties have until Nov. 28, 2006 to complete applications for the Livestock Assistance Grant Program announced recently by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Applications and facts sheets will be available starting October 16 at county Extension Service offices in Big Horn, Carbon, Carter, Custer, Fallon, Powder River and Rosebud counties, as well as at reservation extension offices at Crow Agency and Lame Deer.

The total grant amount for Montana is \$933,443. The program is funded by the USDA, which identified the eligible counties based on U.S. Drought Monitor maps from March 7 to August 31, 2006. The agency determined the dollar amount by the number of cattle and sheep in those counties.

Under an agreement with USDA, Governor Brian Schweitzer appointed the Montana Department of Agriculture to administer the program in Montana to make the money available promptly.

Owners of cattle, sheep, bison and horses who pastured animals in the affected counties for a portion of the period between March 7 and August 31, and who experienced drought losses or expenses, are eligible to receive checks based on the number of breeding stock and on forage-loss estimates in their counties, explained Nancy K. Peterson, director of the Montana Department of Agriculture.

"The list of counties and rules for the program came from the USDA. We recognize that producers in other parts of the state experienced losses due to drought and will not be eligible for this program," Peterson said. "We also know that the amount of money Montana received from USDA will not compensate producers in the seven counties for all of their forage-related losses and expenses."

A simple, one-page form was devised to make it easy for producers to apply. In signing the application, livestock owners certify that they had eligible losses or expenses, which may include forage-related losses, supplement feed costs, transporting feed or livestock to new feed supplies, and costs associated with emergency water supplies.

Cattle, bison and horses will be counted as one animal unit each. Five sheep will count as one animal unit.

Extension agents have agreed to forward the completed applications to the department for processing by no later than the close of business on Nov. 28, 2006. The November deadline will enable the department to get assistance to producers by the end of December, Peterson says.

Forms and information are available at MSU and Reservation Extension Service offices in the seven eligible counties, and must be returned to those offices for review. The producer's taxpayer identification number will be required to complete the application. Copies of the forms and a related fact sheet also can be obtained from a link on the department's website homepage: www.agr.mt.gov.

Participating MSU and Reservation Extension Service offices are located at:

- Big Horn County- 121 West Third Street, Rm. 101, P.O. Box 908, Hardin, MT 59034-0908, Phone: (406) 665-9770, Fax: (406) 665-9776.
- Carbon County - 128 Main St., P.O. Box 230, Joliet, MT 59041-0230, Phone: (406) 962-3522, Fax: (406) 962-3522.
- Custer County - 1010 Main St., Miles City, MT 59301-3419, Phone: (406) 874-3370, Fax: (406) 874-3454.
- Fallon and Carter Counties - 10 W. Fallon, P.O. Box 850, Baker MT, 59313-0850, Phone: (406) 778-7110, Fax: (406) 778-3431.
- Crow Reservation - Little Big Horn College Extension Service, P.O. Box 370, Crow Agency, MT 59022, Phone (406) 638-3132 ext. 132,
- Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation - P.O. Box 128, Lame Deer, MT 59043, Phone: (406) 477-6498, Fax: (406) 477-6488.
- Powder River County - P.O. Box 269, Broadus MT 59317-0269, Phone: (406) 436-2424, Fax: (406) 436-2482.
- Rosebud County – Courthouse, P.O. Box 65, Forsyth MT 59327-0065, Phone: (406) 346-7320, Fax: (406) 346-7551.

Information from the Montana Department of Agriculture can be obtained from Andy Gray, commodity section program manager, at (406) 444-3730 or by e-mail at agr@mt.gov.

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